employees under the method in this paragraph (c)(4) is as follows—

(A) If there are any qualified separate lines of business with a highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio of less than 50 percent (as determined immediately before the employee is allocated to a qualified separate line of business), the highly compensated residual shared employee must be allocated to one of these qualified separate lines of business;

(B) If there are any qualified separate lines of business with a highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio of greater than 200 percent (as determined immediately before the employee is allocated to a qualified separate line of business), the nonhighly compensated residual shared employee must be allocated to one of these qualified separate lines of business;

(C) If there are no qualified separate lines of business with a highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio less than 50 percent, a highly compensated residual shared employee may be allocated to any qualified separate line of business with a highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio of no more than 200 percent, provided that the employee's allocation to the qualified separate line of business does not cause its highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio to exceed 200 percent (as determined immediately after the employee is allocated to the qualified separate line of business);

(D) If there are no qualified separate lines of business with a highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio greater than 200 percent, a nonhighly compensated residual shared employee may be allocated to any qualified separate line of business with a highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio of no less than 50 percent, provided that the employee's allocation to the qualified separate line of business does not cause its highly compensated employee percentage assignment ratio to fall below 50 percent (as determined immediately after the employee is allocated to the qualified separate line of business);

(E) For purposes of this procedure, the employer is permitted to determine which highly compensated residual shared employees and which nonhighly compensated residual shared employees are allocated to each qualified separate line of business, provided that the requirements of this paragraph (c)(4)(iii) are satisfied.

(5) *Small group method*—(i) *In general.* Under the method of allocation provided for in this paragraph (c)(5), each residual shared employee is allocated to a qualified separate line of business chosen by the employer. This method does not apply unless all of the requirements of paragraphs (c)(5)(ii), (iii), and (iv) of this section are satisfied.

(ii) *Size of group.* The total number of the employer's residual shared employees allocated under this paragraph (c) must not exceed three percent of all of the employer's employees. For this purpose, the employer's employees include only those employees taken into account under paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(B) of this section.

(iii) *Composition of qualified separate line of business.* The qualified separate line of business to which the residual shared employee is allocated must have an employee assignment percentage under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section of at least ten percent. In addition, the qualified separate line of business to which the residual shared employee is allocated must satisfy the statutory safe harbor under §1.414(r)–5(b) after the employee is so allocated.

(iv) *Reasonable allocation.* The allocation of residual shared employees under the small group method provided for in this paragraph (c)(5) must be reasonable. Reasonable allocations generally include allocations that are based on the level of services that the residual shared employees provide to the employer's qualified separate lines of business, the similar treatment of similarly situated residual shared employees, and other bona fide business criteria; in contrast, an allocation that is designed to maximize benefits for select employees is not considered a reasonable allocation. For example, allocation of all residual shared employees who work in the same department, or at the same location, to the same qualified separate line of business would be an indication of reasonableness. However, allocation of a group of

similarly situated residual shared employees to a qualified separate line of business for which they provide minimal services might not be considered reasonable. In addition, the allocation of the professional employees of a department to one qualified separate line of business and the allocation of the support staff of the same department to a different qualified separate line of business would not be reasonable.

[T.D. 8376, 56 FR 63453, Dec. 4, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8548, 59 FR 32920, June 27, 1994]

§ 1.414(r)–8 Separate application of section 410(b).

(a) *General rule.* If an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with §1.414(r)–1(b) for a testing year, the requirements of section 410(b) must be applied in accordance with this section separately with respect to the employees of each qualified separate line of business for purposes of testing all plans of the employer for plan years that begin in the testing year (other than a plan tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in §1.414(r)–(c)(2)(ii) for such a plan year). Conversely, if an employer is not treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with §1.414(r)–1(b) for a testing year, the requirements of section 410(b) must be applied on an employer-wide basis for purposes of testing all plans of the employer for plan years that begin in the testing year. See §1.414(r)–1(c)(2) and (d)(6). Paragraph (b) of this section explains how the requirements of section 410(b) are applied separately with respect to the employees of a qualified separate line of business for purposes of testing a plan. Paragraph (c) of this section explains the coordination between sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4). Paragraph (d) of this section provides certain supplementary rules necessary for the application of this section.

(b) *Rules of separate application*—(1) *In general.* If the requirements of section 410(b) are applied separately with respect to the employees of each qualified separate line of business operated by the employer for a testing year, a plan (other than a plan that is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in §1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) for a plan year) satisfies the requirements of section 410(b) only if—

(i) The plan satisfies section 410(b)(5)(B) of an employer-wide basis; and

(ii) The plan satisfies section 410(b) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis.

(2) *Satisfaction of section 410(b)(5)(B) on an employer-wide basis*—(i) *General rule.* Section 410(b)(5)(B) provides that a plan is not permitted to be tested separately with respect to the employees of a qualified separate line of business unless the plan benefits a classification of employees found by the Secretary to be nondiscriminatory. A plan satisfies this requirement only if the plan satisfies either the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) or the nondiscriminatory classification test of §1.410(b)–4 (without regard to the average benefit percentage test of §1.410(b)–5), taking into account the other applicable provisions of §§1.410(b)–1 through 1.410(b)–10. For this purpose, the nonexcludable employees of the employer taken into account in testing the plan under section 410(b) are determined under §1.410(b)–6, without regard to the exclusion in §1.410(b)–6(e) for employees of other qualified separate lines of business of the employer. Thus, in testing a plan separately with respect to the employees of one qualified separate line of business under this paragraph (b)(2), the otherwise nonexcludable employees of the employer's other qualified separate lines of business are not treated as excludable employees. However, under the definition of ''plan'' in paragraph (d)(2) of this section, these employees are not treated as benefiting under the plan for purposes of applying this paragraph (b)(2).

(ii) *Application of facts and circumstances requirements under nondiscriminatory classification test.* The fact that an employer has satisfied the qualified-separate-line-of-business requirements in §§1.414(r)–1 through 1.414(r)–7 is taken into account in determining whether a classification of employees benefiting under a plan that falls between the safe and unsafe harbors satisfies §1.410(b)–4(c)(3) (facts and circumstances requirements). Except

in unusual circumstances, this fact will be determinative.

(iii) *Modification of unsafe harbor percentage for plans satisfying ratio percentage test at 90 percent level*—(A) *General rule.* If a plan benefits a group of employees for a plan year that would satisfy the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis under paragraph (b)(3) of this section if the percentage in §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) were increased to 90 percent, the unsafe harbor percentage in §1.410(b)–4(c)(4)(ii) for the plan is reduced by five percentage points (not five percent) for the plan year and is applied without regard to the requirement that the unsafe harbor percentage not be less than 20 percent. Thus, if the requirements of this paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(A) are satisfied, the unsafe harbor percentage in §1.410(b)–4(c)(4)(ii) is treated as 35 percent, reduced by ¾ of a percentage point for each whole percentage point by which the nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage exceeds 60 percent.

(B) *Facts and circumstances alternative.* If a plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, but has a ratio percentage on an employer-wide basis that falls below the unsafe harbor percentage determined under paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, the plan nonetheless is deemed to satisfy section 410(b)(5)(B) on an employer-wide basis if the Commissioner determines that, on the basis of all of the relevant facts and circumstances, the plan benefits such employees as qualify under a classification of employees that does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees.

(3) *Satisfaction of section 410(b) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis.* A plan satisfies section 410(b) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis only if the plan satisfies either the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) or the average benefit test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(3) (including the nondiscriminatory classification test of §1.410(b)–4 and the average benefit percentage test of §1.410(b)–5), taking into account the other applicable provisions of §§1.410(b)–1 through 1.410(b)–10. For this purpose, the non-excludable employees of the employer taken into account in testing the plan under section 40(b) are determined under §1.410(b)–6, taking into account the exclusion in §1.410(b)–6(e) for employees of other qualified separate lines of business of the employer. Thus, in testing a plan separately with respect to the employees of one qualified separate line of business under this paragraph (b)(3), all employees of the employer's other qualified separate lines of business are treated as excludable employees.

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the application of this paragraph (b).

Example 1. (i) Employer A is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with §1.414(r)–1(b) for the 1994 testing year with respect to all of its plans. Employer A operates two qualified separate lines of business as determined under §1.414(r)–1(b)(2), Line 1 and Line 2. Employer A maintains only two plans, Plan X which benefits solely employees of Line 1, and Plan Y which benefits solely employees of Line 2. In testing Plan X under section 410(b) with respect to the first testing day for the plan year of Plan X beginning in the 1994 testing year, it is determined that Employer A has 2,100 nonexcludable employees, of whom 100 are highly compensated employees and 2,000 are nonhighly compensated employees. After applying §1.414(r)–7 to these employees, 50 of the highly compensated employees and 100 of the nonhighly compensated employees are treated as employees of Line 2, and the remaining 50 highly compensated employees and the remaining 1,900 nonhighly compensated employees are treated as employees of Line 1.

(ii) All of the highly compensated employees and 1,300 of the nonhighly compensated employees who are treated as employees of Line 1 benefit under Plan X. Thus, on an employer-wide basis, Plan X benefits 50 percent of all Employer A's highly compensated employees (50 out of 100) and 65 percent of all Employer A's nonhighly compensated employees (1,300 out of 2,000). Plan X consequently has a ratio percentage determined on an employer-wide basis of 130 percent (65%÷50%), see §1.410(b)–9, and could satisfy section 410(b) under the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) if that section were applied on an employer-wide basis without regard to the provisions of this paragraph (b). Under paragraph (a) of this section, however, the requirements of section 410(b) must be applied separately with respect to the employees of each qualified separate line of business operated by Employer A for all plans of Employer A for plan years that begin in the 1994 testing year. This rule does

not apply to plans tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in §1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii). Plan X benefits only 65 percent of the nonhighly compensated employees of Employer A, however, and therefore cannot satisfy the 70 percent requirement necessary to be tested under that rule. As a result, for the plan year of Plan X beginning in the 1994 testing year, Plan X is not permitted to satisfy section 410(b) on an employer-wide basis and, instead, is only permitted to satisfy section 410(b) separately with respect to the employees of each qualified separate line of business operated by Employer A, in accordance with paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1.* All of the 50 highly compensated employees treated as employees of Line 2 benefit under Plan Y, and 80 of the 100 nonhighly compensated employees treated as employees of Line 2 benefit under Plan Y. Thus, Plan Y benefits 50 percent of all Employer A's highly compensated employees (50 out of 100) and only 4 percent of all Employer A's nonhighly compensated employees (80 out of 2,000). Thus, while Plan Y has a ratio percentage of 80 percent (80%÷100%) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis, it has a ratio percentage of only 8 percent (4%÷50%) on an employer-wide basis. See §1.410(b)–9. Under §1.410(b)–4(c)(4)(iii), the nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage is 2,000/2,100 or 95 percent. Because 8 percent is less than 20 percent (the unsafe harbor percentage applicable to Employer A under §1.410(b)–4(c)(4)(ii)), Plan Y does not satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of §1.410(b)–4 on an employer-wide basis. Nor does Plan Y satisfy the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) on an employer-wide basis, since 8 percent is less than 70 percent. Under these facts, Plan Y does not satisfy section 410(b)(5)(B) on an employer-wide basis in accordance with paragraph (b)(2) of this section for the plan year of Plan Y beginning in the 1994 testing year, and therefore fails to satisfy section 410(b) for that year. This is true even though Plan Y satisfies section 410(b) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis in accordance with paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 2,* except that all of the employees treated as employees of Line 2 benefit under Plan Y. Thus, Plan Y benefits 50 percent of all of Employer A's highly compensated employees (50 out of 100) and 5 percent of all of Employer A's nonhighly compensated employees (100 out of 2,000). Plan Y therefore has a ratio percentage of 100 percent (100%÷100%) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis and a ratio percentage of 10 percent (5%÷50%) on an employer-wide basis. Because Plan Y has a ratio percentage of at least 90 percent on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis, a reduced unsafe harbor percentage applies to Plan Y under paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(A) of this section. The reduced unsafe harbor percentage applicable to Plan Y is 8.75 percent because Employer A's nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage is 95 percent. Plan Y's employer-wide ratio percentage of 10 percent therefore exceeds the unsafe harbor percentage. Plan Y thus satisfies section 410(b)(5)(B) on an employer-wide basis in accordance with paragraph (b)(2) of this section for the plan year of Plan Y beginning in the 1994 testing year. Plan Y also satisfies section 410(b) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis in accordance with paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

Example 4. The facts are the same as in *Example 3,* except that Employer A's total nonexcludable nonhighly compensated employees are 2,500 (rather than 2,000), of whom 100 are treated as employees of Line 2 and of whom 90 benefit under Plan Y. Plan Y has a ratio percentage of 90 percent (90%÷100%) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis, and Employer A's nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage is 2,500/2,600 or 96 percent. Thus, the reduced unsafe harbor percentage applicable to Plan Y under paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(A) of this section is 8 percent. Plan Y benefits 50 percent of all of Employer A's highly compensated employees (50 out of 100) and 3.6 percent of all of Employer A's nonhighly compensated employees (90 out of 2,500). Plan Y therefore has a ratio percentage of only 7.2 percent (3.6%÷50%) on an employer-wide basis, which falls below the reduced unsafe harbor percentage of 8 percent. Nonetheless, under paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B) of this section, Plan Y will be deemed to satisfy section 410(b)(5)(B) on an employer-wide basis if the Commissioner determines that, on the basis of all of the relevant facts and circumstances, the plan benefits such employees as qualify under a classification of employees that does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees.

Example 5. (i) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Plan X benefits only 950 of the employees of Line 1. Assume Plan X satisfies the reasonable classification requirement of §1.410(b)–4(b) on an employer-wide basis. Plan X benefits 50 percent of all Employer A's highly compensated employees (50 out 100) and 47.5 percent of all Employer A's nonhighly compensated employees (950 out of 2,000). Plan X consequently has a ratio percentage determined on an employer-wide basis of 95 percent (47.5%÷50%), see §1.410(b)–9, and thus satisfies section 410(b)(5)(B) on an employer-wide basis.

(ii) Plan X has a ratio percentage determined on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis of 50 percent (50% ÷ 100%). Because 50 percent is less than 70 percent, Plan X must satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of §1.410(b)–4 and the average